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A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE FORTHCOMING REPORT OF THE NATIONAL JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE REORGANIZATION OF HIGH-SCHOOL ENGLISH

For over five years a committee, known as the Joint Committee on the Reorganization of High-School English, and representing both the National Education Association and the National Council of Teachers of English, has been gathering material for a report on the improvement of instruction in the vernacular.¹ The report is nearing completion and will be available in three forms: (1) the brief summary that appears below;² (2) a longer summary, to be published as a part of the report of the Commission on Secondary Education; (3) a bulletin of about 250 pages, to be published by the United States Bureau of Education. The nature of the report as a whole may be inferred from its table of contents, which is as follows: (1) "The Movement for a Reorganization of the English Course"; (2) "The New Point of View"; (3) "Aims and Organization of the Course"; (4) "Typical Subject-Matter in Literature and Composition for Junior and Senior High Schools"; (5) "General Reading"; (6) "The Library"; (7) "Classroom Equipment"; (8) "Articulation with the Elementary School"; (9) "Separation of the Teaching of Literature and the Teaching of Composition"; (10) "Size and Number of Classes"; (11) "Extra-Classroom Activities"; (12) "Preparation of Teachers"; (13) "Cooperation of Departments"; (14) "Differentiation of Courses"; (15) "Measures of Attainment"; (16) "Economy of Time"; (17) Bibliography.

¹ The membership of the committee is as follows: James Fleming Hosc, *chairman*, head of the Department of English, Chicago Normal College, Chicago, Ill.; Allan Abbott, assistant professor of English, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City; Elizabeth G. Barbour, head of the Department of English, Girls' High School, Louisville, Ky.; Mary D. Bradford, superintendent of schools, Kenosha, Wis.; Emma J. Breck, head of the Department of English, University High School, Oakland, Cal.; C. C. Certain, professor of rhetoric, Polytechnic Institute, Auburn, Ala.; Randolph T. Congdon, field agent, State Department of Education, Albany, N.Y.; Mary E. Courtenay, teacher of English and oral expression, Englewood High School, Chicago, Ill.; Joseph V. Denney, dean of the College of Arts, Philosophy, and Science, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio; Charles W. Evans, supervisor of English, East Orange, N.J.; Mary B. Fontaine, supervisor of English, Charleston, W.Va.; Allison Gaw, head of the Department of

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THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE COMMITTEE

1. The college-preparatory function of the high school is a minor one. Hence the *high-school course in English should be organized primarily with reference to basic personal and social needs*. School life that is genuine and hearty is the only satisfactory preparation for either "life" or college.

2. The chief problem of articulation is with the elementary school and can best be solved by regarding *the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades as the first stage of high-school work*.

3. A *varying social background* must now be assumed and provided for. Nevertheless, the chief elements of the English course are universal and may furnish *typical experiences* for all.

4. English is not a merely formal subject, capable of being mastered at a certain point in the curriculum and then dropped. Life and language grow together; hence the *study of English should continue throughout the school period*. Only so much of technique should be taught at any one time as will actually enable pupils to improve their use and understanding of the vernacular.

5. *Language is social* in nature; therefore the study of English should appeal to pupils by reason of actual social use and recognized social value. Composition should be regarded as a sincere attempt to communicate ideas, and literature, both classic and modern, should become an expression of the pupil's own interests and ideals and an interpretation of his own experience.

English, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, Cal.; Mary E. Hall, librarian, Girls' High School, Brooklyn, N.Y.; W. Wilbur Hatfield, instructor in English, Chicago Normal College, Chicago, Ill.; Benjamin A. Heydrick, head of the Department of English, High School of Commerce, New York City; Helen Hill, librarian, William Penn High School, Philadelphia, Pa.; Alfred M. Hitchcock, head of the Department of English, Public High School, Hartford, Conn.; Cornelia Steketee Hulst, head of the Department of English, Central High School, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Walter J. Hunting, superintendent of schools, Carson City, Nev.; William D. Lewis, principal, William Penn High School, Philadelphia, Pa.; Orton Lowe, assistant superintendent of Allegheny County schools, Wilkesburg, Pa.; E. H. Kemper McComb, head of the Department of English, Manual Training High School, Indianapolis, Ind.; May McKittrick, assistant principal and head of the Department of English, East Technical High School, Cleveland, Ohio; Edwin L. Miller, principal, Northwestern High School, Detroit, Mich.; Minnie E. Porter, teacher of English, Emerson School, Gary, Ind.; Edwin T. Reed, college editor, Agricultural College, Corvallis, Ore.; Edwin T. Shurter, professor of public speaking, University of Texas, Austin, Tex.; Elmer W. Smith, professor of rhetoric and public speaking, Colgate University, Hamilton, N.Y.; Charles S. Thomas, head of the Department of English, Newton High School, Newtonville, Mass.; Harriet A. Wood, public-school librarian, Portland, Ore.

6. The study of English as a *training for efficient work* should be distinguished from the study of it as a preparation for the *wholesome enjoyment of leisure*. This will make possible that *co-operation of all departments* which is essential in establishing good habits of reading, of thought, and of expression.

7. The conducting of a *school paper* and the organization of *literary and dramatic clubs* should be encouraged and directed because of the opportunity they afford for free play of the mind and practice in expression. The spirit of the club—and of the laboratory and the shop as well—should animate the English classroom itself. This is now much hindered in the cities by the *excessive number of pupils* imposed upon the teacher. A second limitation to free, individual effort is found in the *absence of suitable libraries* and reading-rooms. Good English work requires adequate equipment.

8. The *supreme essential* to success in high-school English, however, is neither the course nor the conditions, but *the properly trained teacher*. He should be a professional imbued with the amateur spirit, having good scholarship, mature judgment, rational educational standards, and objective methods of measuring results.

THE AIMS OF HIGH-SCHOOL ENGLISH

English comprises two subjects, composition and literature. These are complementary to each other but by no means entirely identical, either in aim or in method.

The chief aim of composition teaching is to develop the power of clear, logical thinking and of effective communication of ideas; it seeks to supply the pupil with an indispensable tool for both public and private uses. In common with other studies, composition also develops power of observation, imagination, and inference and makes substantial additions to one's stores of useful knowledge and his range of ideas and interests. It involves guidance in gathering, selecting, organizing, and presenting ideas for the sake of informing, persuading, entertaining, or inspiring others. It recognizes that good speech demands a sense for established idiom, distinct and natural articulation, correct pronunciation, and the use of an agreeable and well-managed voice; that good writing demands a large vocabulary, a clear and vigorous style, and firmness and flexibility in the construction of sentences and paragraphs; also correctness as to details of form, namely, a firm and legible handwriting, correct spelling, correctness of grammar and idiom, and observance of the ordinary rules for the use of capitals and punctuation.

The aims of literature-teaching are to quicken the spirit and kindle the imagination of the pupil, open up to him the potential significance and

beauty of life, and form in him the habit of turning to good books for companionship. It involves guidance in the gaining of a clear first impression of a book as a whole, the thoughtful consideration of parts in relation to the whole, and a vivid realization of the meaning of both the parts and the whole in terms of the reader's own experience and imagination. It recognizes that good reading requires a definite understanding as to the purpose to be realized by the reading, whether only knowledge of essentials, intimate familiarity with details, or acquaintance with certain selected facts; the habit of careful observation, reflection, and organization; and, in the case of oral rendering, an accurate and sympathetic interpretation of the meaning through well-controlled voice and manner.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE

In the fact, already stated, that the acquisition of ideas and the development of skill, habits, ideals, and attitudes which the English studies are designed to provide for have reference to the two chief aspects of life—work and leisure, production and play—may be found the basis for a vital and economical organization of the English course. The study of books of an informational or persuasive character should support the study of oral and written expression for utilitarian purposes; likewise the practice of literary or creative composition, of reading aloud, and of dramatizing should aid the appreciative reading of novels, dramas, essays, and poems. The terms composition and literature are used to designate these two types of activities in this report; they should represent separate units with equal credits in the high-school course.

THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF COMPOSITION

Ideas to be expressed and the theory of how to express them effectively together constitute the subject-matter of composition. The teacher's first duty is to seize upon or create a situation actually conducive to sincere communication; his next, to inspire and guide the pupil in using facts, inferences, and imaginary conceptions to produce on other minds the effects sought; his last, to instruct the pupil in those principles of the art of composition which will make the practice of it as fruitful as possible. Putting the last first, either in time or in importance, cultivates slavish imitation rather than initiative, and results in knowledge that is merely formal instead of knowledge born of experience and reflection.

The course in composition must be laid out, then, primarily with reference to the expressional activities of the pupils of the school, not with reference to the logic of rhetorical theory. Necessary facts and principles of grammar and rhetoric must, of course, be thoroughly learned, but, even

in the senior high school, the entire system of such facts and principles which it is wise to build up is comparatively small. The gauge is the pupil's own range of observation, power of abstraction, and capacity for practical application. This limitation should be observed, not only in the larger matters of structure and style, but also in such minor elements of correctness as grammatical inflection, punctuation, and spelling. With proper emphasis on the essentials, instruction in correct form may be made to keep pace with the expansion of the pupil's thought. This implies a distinct advance in the theory of composition from year to year.

Subjects for oral and written composition should be drawn mainly from the pupil's own life and experience in the home, the school, and the community. The individual should be encouraged to draw upon his peculiar resources and to exploit his dominant interests. These will vary from time to time and from place to place; hence only the general fields within which proper topics for treatment may be sought can be indicated in any course of study or textbook. The best results will flow from encouraging each pupil to form a specific project or point of view with regard to a limited subject to be presented to a particular audience, to observe how well he succeeds in his purpose, and to learn from the successes and failures of himself and his classmates what the most effective methods of communication are. Writing should frequently be done in school under the supervision of the teacher, and provision should be made for conference between the teacher and each individual pupil.

THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF LITERATURE

Novels, plays, and poems for class study or individual reading by high-school pupils should be selected with reference to what the pupils can bring to them as well as with reference to what they are expected to get out of them. In the end, the stable portion of the literature course will consist of books of universal human interest that appeal strongly and increasingly to the pupils, provided the pupils gain adequate familiarity with them by means of repeated reading under the wise leadership of stimulating, tactful, and enthusiastic teachers. With increasing freedom to serve their constituencies, high-school teachers and principals are coming to know more and more certainly what these books are and how to distribute them according to their intrinsic difficulty. They should be supplemented with a variety of selections, old and new, to give the pupil an adaptable method of reading, a catholic taste, and a discriminating judgment. With maturing years, as first-hand acquaintance with literary works justifies it, knowledge of biography and of literary and social history

should be brought to bear and systematized. Such knowledge should not, however, be sought primarily as an end in itself, and it should never be expected to assume more than modest proportions.

The continuity of the literature course should depend chiefly, not upon chronology or the logical development of the theory of literary form, but upon the relating of each piece read to the maturing experience of the pupil. In the senior high school, however, distinct advantage may be gained from reading consecutively several pieces of the same type, as drama, for example, in order to habituate the pupil in the interpretation of that type. Likewise, pieces belonging to a certain period may gain added force and interest from association with each other. But neither type-study nor period-study should be made the occasion for generalizations necessarily meaningless to the pupils.

ARTICULATION WITH THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

At the end of the sixth grade pupils should be able: (1) to express clearly and consecutively, either in speech or in writing, ideas which are familiar and firmly grasped; (2) to avoid gross grammatical errors; (3) to compose and mail a letter; (4) to spell their own written vocabulary; (5) to read silently and after one reading to reproduce the substance of a simple short story, news item, or lesson; (6) to read aloud readily and intelligently simple news items, lessons from textbooks, or literature of such difficulty as "The Ride of Paul Revere," or Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*; (7) to quote accurately and understandingly several short poems, such as Bennet's "The Flag Goes By" and Emerson's "The Mountain and the Squirrel." Building upon the attainments which the elementary-school pupils are found to possess, each high school should organize a course in English in accordance with the aims and principles set forth above. The details of such a course will of necessity be varied to satisfy the requirements of different communities. A highly condensed outline of such a course follows.

A SUGGESTIVE OUTLINE OF THE HIGH-SCHOOL COURSE IN ENGLISH

Composition and literature, alternately by semesters or by shorter periods, five recitations or conferences a week. General reading by individuals throughout. Equal emphasis upon speaking and writing, and upon oral and silent reading. Promotion based upon qualitative standards.

GRADE VII

A. *Composition*.—(1) Material and Motive: Topics from recreation; work in school and out; observation of processes, scenes, and objects; occupations; books; imagination. (2) Form: Narratives, explanations, descriptions, letters;

grammar, including subject and predicate, object, predicate noun or adjective, recognition of the parts of speech by chief function of each, inflection of nouns and personal pronouns for number and case, the idea of tense, clauses and phrases as groups with functions of single words; spelling of words used; necessary punctuation. (3) Results: Sentence-sense; larger vocabulary; increased power of observation, organization, and expression; correctness; broader interests and knowledge of environment.

B. *Literature*.—(1) Material for Class Work: Shorter poems of Longfellow and Whittier; *Miles Standish* or *Evangeline*; *The Great Stone Face*, *Rip Van Winkle*, and the *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*; *Treasure Island* or *The Gold Bug*; *Stories of King Arthur*; the *Jungle Books*. (2) Individual Reading: List provided.

GRADE VIII

A. *Composition*.—(1) Material and Motive: As in Grade VII plus civic questions; imaginary journeys; admirable characters in life or in books; questions of school life; trips. (2) Form: Expositions, narratives, descriptions, conversations, discussions, letters; grammar, including essential elements of the sentence (subject, predicate, modifiers, connectives), clauses as parts of compound and complex sentences, common and proper nouns, classes of pronouns, person, number, and voice of verbs, comparison and classification of adjectives and adverbs, choice of prepositions, conjunctions as co-ordinating and subordinating; planning of themes; manipulation of sentences; spelling, punctuation. (3) Results: Greater variety of sentence structure; better paragraphs; larger vocabulary and better choice of words; enlarged power to gather, organize, and present ideas; interest in vocations and in public questions.

B. *Literature*.—(1) Material for Class Work: Poems of Holmes, Lanier, Riley, Field; *Snow-Bound*; *Lay of the Last Minstrel* or *Horatius*; *Tales of a Wayside Inn* and *Norse Myths*; *Last of the Mohicans*, *Kidnapped*, *Captains Courageous*, or *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*; *Midsummer-Night's Dream* or the *Tempest*; Franklin's *Autobiography*; Warner's *In the Wilderness*. (2) Individual Reading: List provided.

GRADE IX

A. *Composition*.—(1) Material and Motive: As before; also particular vocations, current events. (2) Form: Grammar as needed to complete a working knowledge to assist composition and reading but without attempting scientific completeness; most available means of attaining clearness, force, and interest in composition presented informally; chief features of explanation and narrative learned inductively; social letters for various occasions; spelling; word-structure; punctuation. (3) Results: Ability to avoid or correct any ordinary error in grammar and to improve expression by varying grammatical structure; the foundation of a system of rhetorical theory; facility in writing social letters; increased power of thought and of expression; broader interests.

B. *Literature*.—(1) Material for Class Work: Narrative poems such as "Atlanta's Race," "The White Ship," "Hervé Riel," "The Courtin'," "The Lady

of the Lake"; lyric poems such as Shelley's "To a Skylark," Emerson's "Concord Hymn," Keats's "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," Whitman's "My Captain," Poe's "To Helen," Garland's "The Wind in the Pines"; short stories such as Poe's *Purloined Letter*, Hawthorne's *Ambitious Guest*, O. Henry's *The Chaparral Prince*, Davis' *Gallegher*, Brown's *Farmer Eli's Vacation*, Hale's *The Man without a Country*; *Ivanhoe*, *Quentin Durward*, or *Kim*; *Julius Caesar*; *Irving's Christmas Sketches*; Palmer's *Homer's Odyssey* or Bryant's *Iliad* (in part), with related myths and legends. (2) Individual reading: List provided.

GRADE X

A. *Composition*.—(1) Material and Motive: As in Grade IX plus new school studies, social relations, knowledge of the world's work and play. (2) Form: Building of paragraphs; sentence manipulation, particularly clearness through connectives, correct placing of modifiers, unmistakable reference; conciseness; word-building; spelling; punctuation; business letters and telegrams; briefs and other outlines; news stories, editorials, advertisements, and dramatization of situations. (3) Results: Greater clearness and force in both speech and writing; fair mastery of the elements involved in short themes; increased ability to persuade; ability to handle typical problems of business correspondence near to experience; the habit of right use of the newspaper.

B. *Literature*.—(1) Material for Class Work: (a) Poetry such as Lowell's "Vision of Sir Launfal," Tennyson's "Enoch Arden and Ulysses," Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes," Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner," Burns's "Bannockburn," Arnold's "Sohrab and Rustum"; (b) Plays such as Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, *Henry V*, and *As You Like It*, Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird*, Peabody's *The Piper*; (c) Fiction such as *Lorna Doone*, *Silas Marner*, *Tale of Two Cities*, *Ben Hur*; (d) Other Prose such as *The Alhambra*, *Travels with a Donkey*, Essays of Burroughs, Grenfell's *Adrift on an Ice Pan*, van Dyke's *Salt*, Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address." (2) Individual Reading: List provided.

GRADE XI

A. *Composition*.—(1) Material and Motive: As before but more definitely the product of investigation and study. (2) Form: Expository outlines and themes of two thousand words or more; debate; parliamentary usage; related letters, short articles, editorials, and descriptions. (3) Results: Ability to gather valuable information on the scale of the magazine article and make it pleasantly available to others, employing a working knowledge of the more commonly recognized principles of effectiveness and of the rules of correctness in doing so.

B. *Literature*.—(1) Material for Class Work: (a) Poetry such as Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* ("The Coming of Arthur," "Gareth and Lynette," "Lancelot and Elaine," "The Holy Grail," "The Passing of Arthur," and connecting links), "The Lady of Shalott," short poems of Browning, Arnold's "Balder Dead," nineteenth-century and contemporary lyrics; (b) Fiction such as *David Copperfield*, *Mill on the Floss*, *House of the Seven Gables*; (c) Plays such as *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus*, *Twelfth Night*, *She Stoops to Conquer*; (d) Speeches on citizenship;

(e) Other Prose from the best current magazines. (2) Individual Reading: List provided.

GRADE XII

A. *Composition*.—Pupils who have done the work outlined for previous grades with credit should be permitted to follow up their special interests, whether in newspaper work, commercial correspondence, advertising, debating, the short story, verse-writing, dramatization, or scientific description, in order to prepare themselves for the callings to which they look forward. Current literature, including the magazines and newspapers, will prove invaluable for such work. Pupils who show marked deficiency in any of the matters outlined for earlier years should be given individual attention or grouped according to need. Many schools will find it impossible for the majority of their pupils to complete the work outlined above for the tenth and eleventh grades before the end of the twelfth.

B. *Literature*.—(1) Material for Class Work: Selected pieces to fill out the list of representative English and American authors read chronologically and connected with previous reading into an outline history of literature; such as Chaucer's *Prologue*, *Old Ballads*, *Hamlet*, *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and *Lycidas*, Songs from Books I and II of *Golden Treasury*, *Pilgrim's Progress I*, *Sir Roger de Coverley Papers*, Poems of Burns, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Byron, Essays of Lamb and Stevenson, Macaulay on Johnson, Emerson's *Fortune of the Republic*. (2) Individual Reading: Collateral list provided.

NOTE.—Two alternative arrangements of the literature course of the senior high school are recommended: First, devote the work of each year to two or more types: for example, poetry and fiction in the tenth; poetry, drama, speeches, and miscellaneous prose in the eleventh; and drama, essay, short story, and miscellaneous prose in the twelfth. In this case literary history is incidental. Secondly, give pupils in large schools an opportunity to elect any one of several courses in the third or fourth year; for example, a course in drama, in the short story, in great speeches, or even in the work of a single author.

GENERAL READING

Since one of the chief aims of the English course is to establish the habit of reading good books and magazines in the right way, pupils should be encouraged and directed to read freely as individuals throughout the school period. To provide for this, lists must be made up, library co-operation secured, informal class conferences planned, time allowed, and credit given. To many pupils general reading will prove more valuable than any formal subject in the high-school course.